

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 08464 01 OF 02 061315Z
ACTION NODS-00

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Z O 061237Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3987
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8464

EXDIS - DIST AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 AND 2
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, LE, IS
SUBJECT: LEBANON - ISRAELI INTENTIONS

REF: A) STATE 169795, B) DAMASCUS 3829, C) STATE 170073

1. WEIZMAN TELEPHONED DCM AT OPENING OF BUSINESS JULY 6 TO SHARE IMPRESSIONS OF SITUATION. HE SAID ON BASIS OF VARIOUS INTELLIGENCE REPORTS GOI HAD CONCLUDED SYRIANS INTENDED TO "MASSACRE" PHALANGIST POPULATION IN BEIRUT. IF THIS HAPPENED, HE FEARED IT WOULD HAVE AN IMMEDIATE DESTABILIZING EFFECT ON THE ISTUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS INEVITABLY WOULD REACT AND "THEN THE FAT WILL BE IN THE FIRE." WHEN ASKED WHAT HE MEANT BY THIS STATEMENT HE ANSWERED "I WILL ONLY SAY THAT I WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE MYSELF PUDDLING BACK INTO SOUTH LEBANON." DCM REPLIED NEITHER WOULD WE.

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2. ASKED WHAT EVIDENCE HE HAD TO SUBSTANTIATE HIS ASSERTION THAT SITUATION IN THE SOUTH WAS IN DANGER OF DETERIORATING, WEIZMAN SAID HE HAD NONE BUT THAT HE WAS "SCARED IT SOON WILL." HE REITERATED HIS EARLIER REQUEST TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT WE STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH AND TO CALL HIM DIRECTLY WHATEVER THE HOUR WHENEVER WE HAVE

NEWS OF ANY SIGNIFICANT NEW DEVELOPMENTS.

3. I HAVE TALKED TO WEIZMAN TWICE IN THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, MOST RECENTLY AT 1300 HOURS JULY 6, AS SOON AS WE GOT WORD OF THE ISRAELI OVERFLIGHTS OF BEIRUT THIS MORNING. I ASKED HIM WHAT HE THOUGHT THEY WERE TRYING TO ACHIEVE WITH SUCH ACTIONS AND WARNED HIM STERNLY ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH SUCH A SHOW OF ISRAELI STRENGTH IN THE NORTH WOULD BE READ BY BOTH CHRISTIANS AND SYRIANS. WEIZMAN SAID THAT THE PURPOSE WAS TO GIVE SOME BOOST TO THE MORALE OF THE "POOR CHRISTIANS," WHO CONTINUE TO BE BATTERED BY SYRIAN ARTILLERY AND ABOUT WHOM "THE WORLD SEEMS TOTALLY UNCONCERNED." HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN ONLY ONE OVERFLIGHT "TO HAVE A LOOK AROUND," AND SAID HE DOUBTED VERY MUCH THAT ANY SONIC BOOMS HAD IN FACT BEEN CREATED. HOWEVER, HE TOOK MY POINT THAT THE CHRISTIANS MIGHT MISINTRPRET SUCH ACTIONS AS IMPLYING A READINESS TO INTERVENE, WHETHER SUCH READINESS EXISTED OR NOT.

4. WEIZMAN INSISTED THAT THE CHRISTIANS "KNOW VERY WELL WE'RE NOT GOING TO GO IN TO LEBANON," "THAT WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF GOING IN BY SEA OR IN ANY OTHER FORM." HE SAID HE SAW NO WAY TO DO SON IN ANY EVENT WITHOUT SEVERAL HUNDRED TANKS, AND THAT THIS WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR THE ISRAELIS.

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5. WEIZMAN KEPT TURNING THE CONVERSATION BACK TO ASK "WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO SAVE THE CHRISTIANS?" HE SAID THAT HE WAS EXTREMELY WORRIED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF LEBANON BECOMING IN EFFECT A SYRIAN-OCCUPIED STATE, WITH THE INEVITABLE DESTABILIZNG EFFECTS THIS WOULD HAVE ON SOUTH LEBANON. HE DID NOT SEE HOW THINGS COULD GO ON THE WAY THEY ARE WITH THE CHRISTIANS BEING CHEWED UP AND EVERYONE STANDING BY AND WATCHING. BUT OBVIOUSLY, HE

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3988

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8464

EXDIS - DIST AS NODIS

SAID SEVEAL TIMES, "WE CANNOT WALK INTO LEBANON AND STRAIGHTEN IT OUT."

6. I STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF TRYING TO CONVINCE THEIR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS TO QUIT PROVOKING THE SYRIANS BY SNIPING AT THEM, AND OUR STRONG IMPRESSION THAT THE SYRIANS WERE DETERMINED TO RETALIATE "TEN-FOLD" AGAINST SUCH PROVOCATIONS WHENEVER THEY OCCURRED. I SAID WE WERE DOING EVERYTHING HUMANLY POSSIBLE DIPLOMATICALLY WITH ALL PARTIES WHO MIGHT HAVE SOME INFLUENCE ON THE SITUATION, INCLUDING OF COURSE THE SYRIANS THEMSELVES, TO GET A CEASEFIRE THAT HELD AND TO WORK OUT SOME MEANS OF SEPARATING FORCES. IN THIS CONNECTION, WEIZMAN ASKED SEVERAL TIMES WHY THE SYRIANS CAN'T WITHDRAW AND RELIEVE THE SITUATION IN THAT FORM. I SAID I THOUGHT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THEM WITHDRAWING SO LONG AS SARKIS AND THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WANTED THEM THERE AS A SECRET

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PEACE-KEEPING FORCE, AND THE CRITICAL PROBLEM AT THE MOMENT WAS TO FIND A WAY TO STOP THE FIRING. IN THIS CONVERSATION AND IN MY PREVIOUS ONE YESTERDAY, AS IN HIS CONVERSATION EARLIER TODAY WITH THE DCM, WEIZMAN HAS COME BACK OVER AND OVER AGAIN TO THE GROWING ISRAELI CONCERN THAT SYRIA IS EMBARKED ON A DELIBERATE EFFORT TO TAKE OVER LEBANON AND SQUASH THE CHRISTIANS ONCE AND FOR ALL. HE SAYS THAT SHOULD SUCH OCCUR, IT WOULD HAVE A DEVASTATING EFFECT NOT ONLY ON THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH BUT ALSO ON THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT, SINCE IT WOULD CHANGE THE OVERALL SECURITY SITUATION

FOR ISRAEL IN THE LONG RUN VERY SUBSTANTIALLY. IT IS OBVIOUS HE SAID THAT NO ONE CAN RATIONALLY SPEAK AT THE MOMENT ABOUT THE LEBANESE ARMY COMING SOUTH GIVEN WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE NORTH. HE RAISED WITH ME THE QUESTION OF WHETHER SOME UNIFIL ELEMENTS MIGHT NOT BE INTERPOSED AT LEAST SYMBOLICALLY BETWEEN THE PARTIES IN BEIRUT TO ASSIST IN STABILIZING THE PICTURE.

7. I DETECTED NO EAGERNESS WHATSOEVER ON WEIZMAN'S PART FOR GETTING ISRAELI FORCES INVOLVED IN ANY WAY, SHAPE OR FASHION, BUT A RISING TIDE OF FRUSTRATION AND FEAR THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE DECIDED ONCE AND FOR ALL TO "TAKE CARE OF THE CHRISTIAN PROBLEM". WEIZMAN REFERRED TO GREAT POLITICAL CONCERN IN ISRAEL ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN SITUATION, AND ASKED RHETORICALLY HOW ALL OF YOU CAN CONTINUE TO SIT BY AND WATCH THIS HAPPEN

8. WHEN I SPOKE TO WEIZMAN THIS AFTERNOON HE WAS IN A MEETING WITH THE CHIEF OF STAFF AND THE CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE, AND OBVIOUSLY CONSIDERING THE VERY UNAPPETIZING OPTIONS WHICH THE ISRAELIS FACE IF SOMETHING IS NOT DONE QUICKLY TO CALL OFF THE SYRIAN SHELLING. HE ADMITTED
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THAT OVERFLIGHTS COULD GIVE A TOTALLY WRONG SIGNAL TO THE CHRISTIANS, SINCE HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ISRAEL TO INTERVENE ON THEIR BEHALF AND HE HAD ABSOLUTELY NO INTENTION OF CONSIDERING SERIOUSLY ANY SUCH OPTION. BUT, HE SAID, IF THIS CONTINUES IT WILL CHANGE THE WHOLE STRATEGIC PICTURE FOR US AND WE ARE EXTREMELY WORRIED ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS FOR OVERALL PEACE PROSPECTS IN THE REGION. WITH RESPECT TO THE INSTRUCTION IN STATE 169795 FOR ME TO TALK TO BEGIN, I HAVE NOT YET DONE SO. THAT MESSAGE WAS SENT BEFORE THE LAST OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING LAST NIGHT, AND DOES NOT SAY ANYTHING WHICH WE HAVE NOT ALREADY SAID TO BEGIN IN THE LAST TWO DAYS. I WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING SOME MORE USEFUL POINTS TO MAKE TO HIM, IF INDEED THERE IS ANYTHING MORE WE CAN SAY. I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT OUR APPROACHES TO THE SYRIANS HAVE THUS FAR BEEN FAR TOO DELICATE TO HAVE MUCH EFFECT. PERHAPS SOMETHING IS IN THE WORKS AT THE MOMENT OF WHICH I AM UNAWARE. IF SO, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL INDEED FOR ME TO BE ABLE TO BRIEF BEGIN WITH MORE ASSURANCE THAN THE PRESENT INSTRUCTION PERMITS.
LEWIS

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